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SPECIAL SECTION: LIBRARY REORGANIZATION FOR THE FUTURE

REORGANIZING COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT AND ACQUISITIONS IN A MEDIUM-SIZED ACADEMIC LIBRARY

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Abstract:

The University of Dayton Roesch Library reorganized the collection development and acquisitions departments during 1995 and 1996 in order to improve the collection and make the process of acquiring materials more responsive to the needs of students and faculty. The old organization was department-based, with teaching faculty controlling most of the materials budget. The Associate Director for Technical Services coordinated the funds and supervised acquisitions staff. Perceived imbalances in the collection, student and faculty dissatisfaction with the process, and the desire for public services librarians to have greater influence in collection decisions led to a major reorganization. The new model distributes budget authority among all librarians based on subjects rather than academic departments. It empowers librarians to make purchasing and weeding decisions within their subject areas. Book and periodical acquisitions are combined into a single support unit that reports to the Coordinator and Head of Collection Management. The new organization has streamlined acquisitions processes to make ordering simpler, and the time between ordering and receipt has been shortened. The new model shifts the emphasis from process to service.

HISTORY

As part of a library-wide restructuring, the University of Dayton Roesch Library reorganized collection development and acquisitions during the 1995–1996 academic year. The larger reorganization effort was intended to flatten the organization, establish a participative, team-based management system, and ensure that all library functions were responsive to the needs of the library's primary clientele [1].

The University of Dayton is a comprehensive, Catholic university offering a broad range of undergraduate programs, as well as masters and doctoral degrees in selected areas. There are approximately 6,400 undergraduate and 4,000 graduate students at the University of Dayton. Roesch Library is the primary library for the university. A separate library serves the law school and there is also a special library for Marian studies. Roesch Library employs 13 faculty librarians and 30 FTE support staff.

Under the previous organization, the Associate Director for Technical Services managed

the Book Acquisitions and Periodicals Departments, as well as the Cataloging Department, Preservation and Conservation, and the University Archives. With the exception of the reference collection, books for the library were selected by the faculty in the academic departments of the university. Each department was given a certain allocation from the book budget to spend. The Associate Director for Technical Services directly controlled a collection development fund that was approximately 12% of the base book budget in addition to a separate endowment fund equivalent to about 17% of the base book budget. Traditionally, approval plans were not used to acquire materials for the book collection. The reference collection was selected by the Coordinator of Information Services in consultation with the reference librarians. The Book Acquisitions Department consisted of two support staff who reported to the Associate Director for Technical Services.

The periodicals budget was managed by the Periodicals Librarian, who reported to the Associate Director for Technical Services. There was no specific allocation of funds but merely a record of expenditures by department. New titles were added by request of the faculty and some general titles were added by the Periodicals Librarian. Periodical indexes were counted among the information services expenditures. The Periodicals Librarian supervised one support staff member for periodicals acquisitions and one support staff member for periodicals binding and processing.

In the days of more liberal budgets, periodicals were added as requested by the faculty and no particular effort was made to drop titles. As budgets shrank, the academic departments were asked to give up subscriptions worth an equivalent dollar amount in order to begin new subscriptions. When the amount needed to keep pace with inflation was not met by budget increases or the natural attrition of periodicals, subscriptions were dropped in consultation with faculty. The choice of which periodicals to drop was usually based on high subscription cost and perceived low use. Using this method, no drastic periodicals cuts were needed until 1992–1993 academic year when 7.5% of the periodicals budget had to be cut during a period of declining enrollment. To meet this budget reduction, the most expensive periodical titles were canceled. These cancellations affected less than 1% of the total number of subscriptions. Science materials had begun to consume a large share of the budget. Two science departments alone accounted for 25% of the periodicals budget.

The book budget in turn grew at a very slow rate. Each academic department had a different attitude toward collection development. Some departments spent all of their allocations and asked for more. Some did not spend their allocations completely, and the excess was used to pay for other departments' overspending. In some departments, all requests had to be approved by one person, in others, any interested faculty member could request books. The collection development fund, controlled by the Associate Director for Technical Services, could be used to fill in gaps in the collection. In practice, this method of collection development led to severe imbalances in the collection. Some departments were primarily interested in selecting materials for faculty research, some were not interested in developing their collections at all, and a few were interested in maintaining a balanced collection in their subject areas. This system also tended to neglect interdisciplinary materials.

Reference librarians were frustrated by their lack of input in the selection process. When assisting students in finding materials for term papers and class assignments, it was apparent to the reference librarians that the collection suffered from serious imbalances. A special gift to the university from an alumnus first opened the door to collection development by librarians in 1986. This gift was to be used to purchase books for undergraduate education. The Associate

Director for Technical Services allowed interested librarians to make selections in specific subject areas against that fund. This gift represented more than one-third of the library's book expenditures during the six years it was available. The gift was very helpful in building up the collection in the areas in which the librarians were most active. Once the gift ended in 1992, collection development reverted to the traditional form [2].

IMPETUS FOR CHANGE

The general restructuring of the library organization provided the opportunity for change in collection development and acquisitions. A reorganization advisory team of four librarians appointed by the University Provost and the Dean of Libraries began in mid-1995 to create a new organizational model. Input from all library staff was solicited by electronic mail and through staff meetings. A restructuring workshop, led by an outside consultant and attended by the entire library staff, was held to clarify the library's goals and elicit further staff input. One result of this workshop was the creation of a market research task force, which was charged with soliciting information from the faculty, students, and staff about the library's success or failure in meeting their needs. This task force contracted with two on-campus agencies, the Social Science Research Center and the Center for Business and Economic Research. These agencies conducted a general survey of the university community, and they also studied students and faculty in focus groups. The results of these efforts (which were not available until a few months after the reorganization had taken place) demonstrated that both faculty and students were less than satisfied with the quality of the library collection.

At the same time, the library's involvement in OhioLINK, a statewide consortium of academic libraries, necessitated a change in the structure of Roesch Library's collection development activities. The Cooperative Information Resources Management (CIRM) committee of OhioLINK was looking for a way to foster cooperative collection development among the member institutions [3]. One method under consideration was the creation of a number of subject groups comprising selectors from each institution, who would analyze the statewide resources in their respective subjects, identify strengths and weaknesses, and formulate and execute a plan for some form of cooperative collection development. In order for Roesch Library to participate effectively in this effort, the reorganization advisory team recommended that collection development responsibilities be transferred to librarians, who would be organized along subject lines.

THE REORGANIZATION PROCESS

The reorganization advisory team recommended that all collection development be placed in the hands of librarians and that all librarians participate in collection development by being assigned subject areas and a specific portion of the book budget to manage. The overall restructuring eliminated two associate director positions (for technical and public services) and created three head positions with functional teams reporting to each head. The Head of Client Services manages the largest number of teams (four), while the Head of Bibliographic Management supervises two teams. The Coordinator and Head of Collection Management supervises a support team for collection management, which comprises staff members who were previously part of Book and Periodical Acquisitions. This position also coordinates the collection development activities of all librarians. The three head positions are equivalent to academic

department heads, with formal appointments coming from the president's office. All three serve four-year renewable terms.

After the final recommendations of the reorganization advisory team were approved by the Provost, appointments were made to the new positions. The Coordinator and Head of Collection Management became a member of the temporary team that facilitated the implementation of the new structure. Among other activities, this team assigned specific collection development subject areas to librarians. In some cases this was based on an expressed interest from the librarian or a willingness to develop an interest in areas where there was no obvious choice.

An important component of the reorganization was that collection development is now considered to be subject-based, rather than department-based, recognizing that materials in a particular subject area may be of interest to more than one department [4]. The reorganization advisory team chose to establish subjects based on the RLG Conspectus categories which were also being used by the OhioLINK subject groups. In addition, reference, ethnic and minority studies, and women's studies were given separate subject lines. This shift of collection development responsibility from academic departments to librarian subject selectors not only facilitated cooperation with other OhioLINK libraries, but it also simplified budget management by significantly reducing the overall number of funds.

INITIAL PROJECTS

The reorganization took effect in January 1996, and the new collection development effort faced several immediate challenges: training new selectors, reallocating the materials budget to reflect the new organization, and streamlining the acquisitions process to make selection more efficient and speed the receipt of materials. A collection development workshop was held in late January, in which all subject selectors participated. The workshop was conducted by an outside consultant who headed collection development at a neighboring university library and who had conducted similar workshops in the past. Topics included drafting collection development policies, evaluating the collection, reviewing sources, ordering procedures, and workflow.

The reorganization provided the opportunity to review acquisitions procedures as well. A number of changes were made to improve both efficiency and customer service. Most book orders are now sent to vendors electronically. While selectors do not yet have the ability to send orders to acquisitions electronically, the paper process was streamlined and made more user-friendly. Previously all orders had to be submitted on three-part carbon order forms; now selectors can submit approval slips, *Choice* cards, or anything else with adequate bibliographic information, with selector approval indicated by their initials and the appropriate fund code.

The monthly "Books Added to the Collection" booklet, traditionally produced by acquisitions staff, was discontinued in favor of a less expensive and more timely list of new books on the library's web pages. All statistics were reviewed, and several categories that no longer served a practical purpose were dropped. The fund structure was greatly simplified, and monthly fund reports now go to the appropriate librarian rather than to academic departments.

The Coordinator and Head of Collection Management worked with other librarians to develop a formula to allocate the book budget among the subject lines. The new formula distributes funds based on number of faculty, student credit hours, cost of materials, and use (based on circulation statistics from the online catalog). The old budget had been largely based

on tradition: departments received incremental increases, with somewhat larger increases going to the departments that complained the most. The new allocations resulted in some dramatic shifts and a number of previously underfunded areas now receive more adequate support. The formula was presented to academic department chairs in a series of meetings, and though there was some unhappiness, most perceived the new method to be a fair method for distributing limited resources.

Periodicals required much more attention, as there had been little active management of the periodicals collection in the past. The Coordinator and Head of Collection Management formed a serials work group to gather data on use and the extent to which the existing collection was meeting campus needs. The work group planned and carried out projects for collecting data on the use of current and bound periodicals. They also surveyed teaching faculty to identify those titles deemed most important both for undergraduate teaching and faculty research. At the same time, it became apparent that expected increases in the periodicals budget would not meet projected cost increases, and a periodicals cancellation project was begun. The work group, in consultation with the Coordinator and Head of Collection Management, developed a serials allocation plan using criteria similar to those used in the book allocation formula. The plan features a macro-level allocation by broad subject areas: humanities; social sciences (including education and business); and science and technology. This macro-allocation is based on student credit hours and average cost of materials. Sub-allocations for specific disciplines were created within each area; these are based on number of faculty, student credit hours, and cost of materials. A comparison of the proposed new allocation with the current budget indicated that the budget was badly skewed toward science and technology, while many areas in the humanities and social sciences (including some areas with large enrollments) received far less support than they should. While it proved politically impractical to implement the new allocation plan fully, it was used as a guide in making needed cuts, which amounted to approximately 10% of the current year's periodical budget. Those areas that were comparatively overfunded sustained nearly all of the cuts, with individual titles being canceled on the basis of use data and negotiation with the appropriate departments. A few subject areas, which were revealed to be grossly underfunded, received modest increases in support.

Active weeding of the collection was another initiative resulting from the reorganization. For many years there had been almost no weeding. The library collection is now approaching its capacity, and the addition of new shelf space is unlikely. While deep philosophical differences persist among the library faculty about weeding (and also about whether the Roesch Library houses a research collection or an undergraduate collection), most have come to the conclusion that the weeding of outdated and unused materials is now a necessity. Each librarian now weeds regularly according to criteria suitable for their particular subject areas.

RESULTS AND FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

The former organizational model of collection development had served the library and university adequately in earlier days when both were smaller and less complex. Growth in the number of students and programs (particularly graduate programs) over the years, technological changes, and the need to cooperate with other institutions in a consortial environment demanded a new, more flexible and responsive method of collection development. Dissatisfaction with the collection, on the part of librarians, students, and many teaching faculty, coupled with the uneven results of faculty-driven collection development also indicated the need for change. In the new

model, librarians and teaching faculty collaborate in building local collections, and librarians are active in efforts to coordinate collection development with consortia partners. Librarians who had previously been excluded from nearly all collection development decisions now feel empowered and have enthusiastically taken responsibility for their subject areas, even though this entails substantial additional work for most. They actively manage the library's collections with an eye toward client needs, with a particular focus on the needs of undergraduates. While it is difficult for some to accept, emphasis on collection growth as an end in itself is now discouraged.

The role of the Coordinator and Head of Collection Management has also evolved. While the associate director for technical services had relatively absolute control over the materials budget (including veto power, rarely exercised, over faculty requests), the new model gives selectors autonomy with regard to the materials budgets for their areas. The Coordinator and Head's function is to formulate overall collection policy (in collaboration with the Dean and the Library's Services and Resources Council) [5], allocate funds, coordinate and evaluate the activities of the selectors, assist selectors in resolving problems, and supervise the acquisitions staff. In short, authority and responsibility for collection management is now much less centralized. The acquisitions unit has become a support unit for collection management. Its processes have been streamlined by eliminating some unnecessary tasks and automating others. The unit now focuses on client services rather than processes. Although this has caused some disruption and inconvenience for acquisitions staff, it has greatly facilitated the work of the subject selectors.

The reorganization both of collection development and of the library as a whole has generally been regarded as a success by the university administration and a majority of the library faculty and staff. The library now commands more attention and greater respect from the administration. Morale and job satisfaction within the library have improved [6]. The changes in collection development and acquisitions have resulted in a more responsive library collection as new materials are now ordered, received, and processed more quickly than in the past. The new allocation formulas serve as guides for the continuous balancing of the collection between subject areas and faculty/student needs, and they have also helped to raise awareness of the university faculty and administration about the realities of the cost of library materials.

REFERENCES

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2. The gift was renewed for the academic years 1995-1996 and 1997-1998 and again constitutes a significant part of the library's book budget.
3. For an overview of cooperative collection development initiatives within OhioLINK see: Kohl, David. "Resource Sharing in a Changing Ohio Environment," *Library Trends*, 45 (Winter 1997), 435-447 (especially 444-447); Kohl, David. "Farewell to All That. . . Transforming Collection Development to Fit the Virtual Library Context: The OhioLINK Experience," *Restructuring Academic Libraries: Organizational Development in the Wake of Technological Change*, ed. Charles A. Schwartz. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 1997, pp. 108-126.
4. Schad, Jasper. "Allocating Materials Budgets in Institutions of Higher Education," *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 3 (January 1978), 331.
5. The Services and Resources Council, which was established as part of the reorganization process, consists of all librarians plus two elected representatives from the support staff. It discusses and votes on all new policy initiatives.
6. Webb and Moore. "Measuring the Effects of Change."

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